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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

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Dear Admiral Turner:

We had a good talk on Tuesday and I look forward to the next chapter. Here is the Podhoretz article I promised.

Best,

Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Stansfield Turner
Director
The Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

THE CULTURE OF APPEASEMENT

A naive pacifism is the dangerous legacy of Vietnam

by Norman Podhoretz

HAS THE UNITED STATES recovered from Vietnam? The general feeling seems to be that it has. Just this past Independence Day, for example, Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* delivered himself of the view that it was "a familiar sort of Fourth"—the kind, he said, "that was commonplace, even predictable, before the long, successive traumas of Vietnam and Watergate brought Americans a decade of self-doubt, self-criticism, self-loathing, on the one hand, and responding denials, anger, and chauvinism on the other." Of course, Wicker's rhetoric loads the case; it is in fact so reminiscent of the fevered atmosphere of the Vietnam era that in itself it casts doubt on the return to normalcy he then goes on to celebrate. But such subtleties aside, many people would agree that we have recovered from Vietnam and that we are back to normal again. I am not one of those people. I think that, far from having put Vietnam behind us, we are still living with it in a thousand different ways. It is there everywhere, a ubiquitous if often eerily invisible presence in our political culture. And it has left us a legacy of influence which threatens to have an even more destructive effect on our future than it has already had on our past.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this influence is in the new American attitude toward war. The idea of war has never been as natural or as glamorous to Americans as it used to be to the English or the Germans or the French. We have always tended in this country to think of war as at best a hideous necessity, not as a "continuation of politics by other means" or, alternatively, as an opportunity for heroism, glory, and honor. War to Americans is a calamity when it happens, it is a dirty business while it lasts, and the sooner it can be gotten over with the better. But negative as this attitude may be, it is still a far cry from the undifferentiated fear, loathing, and revulsion that the prospect of war now seems to inspire in the American mind.

No doubt a rise in pacifist sentiment is inevitable in the wake of any war, especially a war that ends, as Vietnam did, in humiliation and defeat. No doubt, also, the way the war in Vietnam was reported as well as the way it was opposed (a distinction more easily made in theory than it was ever observed in practice) helped to stimulate a vaguely pacifist response. All one heard about and saw was the horrors of war—unredeemed, as it appeared, by any noble purpose. No heroes emerged, only villains and victims, and nothing good was accomplished by American troops and American arms, only evil: only destruction, misery, murder, and guilt.

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David Suter

This is how pacifist ideologues look upon war in general, and the prominent position of pacifist organizations in the protest movement against American military involvement in Vietnam probably influenced the way the war came to be conceived and described. (It is worth noting, however, that the pacifist world was split between those who, in the traditional pacifist spirit, regarded all wars as equally evil and those who, in a newer spirit, were willing to justify and even celebrate "wars of national liberation" and to condemn only "wars of imperialist aggression," such as they imagined the United States was waging in Vietnam.)

But be all that as it may, so powerful did the pacifist tide become that it even reached backward to engulf World War II, probably the most popular war in which the United States had ever participated. To this "Vietnamization" of World War II, as we may call it, two immensely successful novels of the Sixties, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, made perhaps the largest contribution. Although written without reference to Vietnam and published in 1961, just before American troops began to be sent there, *Catch-22* achieved full cultic status only later in the decade, when it could be seized upon to discredit the one war from which something good had almost universally been thought to have come. Not even World War II, the war against Hitler, was worth fighting, said *Catch-22*, to the acclaim of millions; nor, added Vonnegut in his story of the bombing of Dresden, had we acted any less criminally in that war than we were acting in Vietnam.

AS THE PAST was thus Vietnamized, so is the future now being subjected to the same treatment. We have, that is, reached a point at which any American military action, anywhere in the

world, in support of any objective whatever, has become difficult to imagine. Officially, of course, the President and those who speak in his name continue to declare that we will "honor our commitments." But does anyone take it for granted any longer—as everyone did before our defeat in Vietnam—that we would do so if it meant going to war?

And even short of actually going to war, there is the matter of our willingness to maintain the military forces necessary to deter the Soviet Union from moving any further ahead. Here, too, just as we officially remain committed to the defense of Western Europe, Japan, Israel, South Korea, and perhaps one or two other countries, we are also officially determined to prevent the Soviet Union from achieving the kind and degree of military superiority which would make a mockery of that commitment. But again appearances are misleading. Every year, it seems, the struggle against military spending grows more intense. While the Soviet Union engages in the most massive military buildup in the history of the world, we haggle over every weapon. We treat our own military leaders as though they were wearing the uniform of a foreign power. Everything they tell us about our military needs is greeted with hostility and suspicion, and when, in response to sentiment of this nature, the President decides to scrap the B-1 bomber, one would think from the answering cheer that our mortal enemies had suffered a grievous defeat.

Now it may be that the decision to develop an updated B-52 fleet armed with cruise missiles instead of the B-1 was sound from a strictly military point of view, as well as from an economic one. But it would be naive to suppose that the campaign against the B-1 was fueled by a desire for the most effective possible weapons system at the lowest possible cost. No doubt this was what the President and some others had in mind, but cost-effectiveness was hardly the factor which made for the tremendous passion over the B-1. The real goal of the campaign against it, according to a spokesman for Clergy and Laity Concerned (a group which is itself a legacy of Vietnam, having been spawned in opposition to that war and having survived to fight another day), "was to raise fundamental questions about the meaning of national security and the militarization of American foreign policy, using the B-1 as symbol *par excellence*." We can, therefore, expect that the next stage of the campaign will be an effort to prevent development of the cruise missile. For "to the extent that the Administration is allowed to replace an obsolescent technology (the manned bomber) with a new and even more dangerous technology (the cruise missile), it can be assumed that the public, the press, and the Congress have failed to learn the most crucial lessons of the B-1 campaign." Those lessons being presumably that we ought to have no weapons at all.

In addition to pacifism, Vietnam has left us with a legacy of native anti-Americanism. Obviously, the explicit anti-Americanism which surfaced on the radical Left in the late Sixties has receded into virtual invisibility. No longer do we see the name of the country spelled with a *k* to suggest an association with Nazi Germany. Nor do vilifications of American society fill the papers and the airwaves to the exclusion of any other idea as they did only a few years ago. Eldridge Cleaver has become a born-again Christian and a patriot. Rennie Davis has become an insurance salesman. Tom Hayden has joined the Democratic Party. Jerry Rubin is off the streets and "into" the pursuit of maturity. Abbie Hoffman has disappeared. But this does not mean that the anti-American attitudes they and others like them did so much to propagate have also disappeared. These attitudes are still here and, in the subtler forms they now assume, are perhaps even more widespread, and certainly more respectable, than they ever were before.

They are present, for example, in the notion that the main obstacle to nuclear disarmament is the American military establishment. From this it is concluded that unilateral "restraint" in the development of weapons by the United States is all that is needed to make the Russians follow suit, as though the only reason they have constructed so awesome an arsenal is that we have set them a bad example which they have been forced to imitate. Anti-Americanism is also present in the idea that Americans consume more than their "fair share" of resources. From this it is concluded that a voluntary reduction in the American standard of living (a kind of unilateral economic disarmament) is all that is needed to facilitate a more equitable distribution of wealth throughout the world, as though prosperity were a zero-sum game and as though we did not in any case produce more wealth than we consume. And anti-Americanism is present in the view that the main threat to the liberties of the American people is the American government itself. From this it is argued that preventing the FBI and the CIA from using questionable methods of surveillance in the attempt to catch spies and terrorists is a more urgent order of business than doing anything when the KGB employs the same methods against American citizens in America on a vastly larger scale.

Indeed, immediately after the news broke this past summer that the Soviet Union had been monitoring an untold number of phone conversations in this country, that this had been known to the authorities for at least the past four years, and that nothing had been done about it for fear of endangering détente, Tom Wicker rushed into print to express his outrage at electronic eavesdropping—by American law-enforcement agencies. The next day, while the President was denying that there was anything "aggressive" about this Soviet activity, the *New York Times* reported on another page that civil suits had been filed against agents of the FBI associated with a former colleague named John Kearney who had "headed an internal security unit known as Squad 47 [and who] has been charged with five felony counts stemming from allegedly illegal mail-openings and wiretaps that his men conducted in a search for fugitive members of the Weather Underground, a terrorist group."

The third major legacy of Vietnam with which we are still living is the altered American attitude toward Communism. Before Vietnam the spread of Communism was regarded as the single greatest danger to American security and American values. Today no less an authority than the President of the United States stigmatizes this old attitude as an "inordinate fear of Communism" and congratulates

himself and his fellow Americans on having overcome it.

One may wonder how the fear of a totalitarian system armed, as Solzhenitsyn puts it, "to the teeth," aggressively on the move, and sworn to destroy the political system to which we ourselves are presumably committed, could ever be inordinate. But Mr. Carter is almost certainly right in observing that no such fear is widespread in America today. A few individuals like Henry Jackson, Paul Nitze, and Elmo Zumwalt, and a few small groups like the Committee on the Present Danger and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority keep trying to alert American public opinion to the unprecedented dimensions of the Soviet military buildup, but they are rewarded for their pains with accusations of hysteria, paranoia, servility toward the Pentagon, and worse. While the number of strategic nuclear missiles in the Soviet arsenal increases, while Soviet warships now appear for the first time in distant waters which no Russian navy ever thought necessary or desirable to patrol, while Soviet conventional forces are strengthened and multiplied on the Western front, while Soviet probes are made into Africa through Cuban surrogates with the evident intention of enabling the Russians to control sealanes vital to the commerce of the entire West, and while Communist parties move closer and closer to power in Italy and France—while all this goes on, elaborate exercises in statistical manipulation and sophistical rationalization are undertaken to explain it all away as unreal or as insignificant or as understandable or as unthreatening.

Nor are such exercises confined to articles in the liberal press. They even come out of the CIA and the Department of Defense, whose reassuring estimates of the Soviet-American military balance are obversely reminiscent of intelligence reports which also told a series of Presidents what they wanted to hear about the progress of the war in Vietnam. What Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon wanted to hear was that the war could be won and that it was going well; what President Carter wants to hear is that defense spending can be cut without endangering the security of the United States. Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon were given wishful intelligence analyses and inflated body counts; Carter is given the CIA Team A and the Department of Defense Presidential Review Memorandum 10, whose contents, in William Safire's description, "feed the hopes for a smooth road to peace, with reduced American military expenditures leading to easily balanced budgets."

But denying the realities of the Soviet military buildup is only one of the forms our new freedom from the old "inordinate fear of Communism" has been taking. Another variant acknowledges that this buildup is real but regards it as a development to be welcomed by the United States rather than feared. The reasoning behind this bizarre notion is that only when the United States and the Soviet Union are equal in strength—when, in the jargon of arms control, "parity" has been achieved—will both sides feel secure enough to put a halt to the arms race and even to begin cutting back. In accord with these assumptions, Richard Pipes, the former director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard (who also headed a team of nongovernmental experts appointed during the Ford Administration to review the CIA's estimate of Soviet military capability), writes, "The United States in the mid-1960's unilaterally froze its force of ICBM's at 1,054 and dismantled nearly all its defenses against enemy bombers.... The Russians were watched benignly as they moved toward parity with the United States in the number of intercontinental launchers, and then proceeded to attain numerical superiority."

A similarly benign attitude has been developing toward the progress of Communism in Western Europe. In this case, government officials, under Nixon and Ford and now under Carter, have lagged behind the "advanced" sectors of public opinion and the foreign-policy establishment in continuing to see the entry of Communist parties into the governments of Italy and France as a danger to NATO (not to mention to democracy). But the indications are that the gap is being closed. Already Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has spoken in much milder terms about Eurocommunism than his predecessor did; echoing the latest conventional wisdom on the subject, he has suggested that Eurocommunism may be more of a threat to the Soviet Union than it is to the West. By this logic, the spread of Communism into non-Communist countries ought to be encouraged by the United States rather than resisted, and American power used not to make the world safe for democracy but to make it safe for Communist regimes which declare their independence of Soviet control. Yet no Communist regime outside the Soviet orbit, not even the one in Yugoslavia, countenances any political liberty at all within its own borders, while some independent Communist regimes, notably the one in China, are more totalitarian than the Soviet Union itself. Jean-François Revel, the distinguished French political commentator, puts it with characteristic sharpness when he says in his recent book *The Totalitarian Temptation* that "de-Russification does not mean democratization"; to which one may add that it does not mean any lessening of hostility to the cause of liberty in international affairs either. But, clearly, Revel's view is on the defensive nowadays in the United States, where we seem to be moving beyond our new freedom from the "inordinate" fear of Communism to an even headier freedom from any fear of Communism at all.

Or is it perhaps the opposite which is true? Have we, that is, been plunged by Vietnam into so great a fear of Communism that we can no longer summon the will to resist it?

IN SPECULATING ON this possibility, I have been struck very forcibly by certain resemblances between the United States today and Great Britain in the years after the first world war. The British, of course, were on the winning side in that war, whereas we were the losers in Vietnam. But World War I took so great a toll of lives and ideals that for all practical purposes it was experienced by the British as a defeat. Especially among the upper-class young—as Martin Green shows in his brilliant "Narrative of 'Decadence' in England After 1918," *Children of the Sun*—there developed many of the same tendencies we see all around us in America today. Thus, for example, words such as *soldier* and *fighting*, which had previously carried a positive charge, now became so distasteful that the *Iliad*, with its celebration of the martial virtues, could no longer be comfortably read.

Nothing good could be said about war: it was wanton carnage pure and simple. Nor was it ever justified: the things that matter, Aldous Huxley declared, can be neither defended nor imposed by force of arms. When war comes, wrote Brian Howard in verse more typical in its sentiments than gifted in its language, it is "because a parcel of damned old men/Want some fun or some power or something." It was in an atmosphere suffused with such ideas and attitudes that the Oxford Pledge never to fight "for King and country" was taken by so many thousands of British undergraduates in the early 1930s.

For England itself had been discredited by the first world war in the eyes of an entire generation of the privileged young. It was a wicked country because it had senselessly sent the flower of its youth to the slaughter, and it was doomed because it rested on obsolescent social and political foundations (by which some meant that there was too much inequality and others meant there was not enough). Worst of all from the point of view of not a few of these "bright young things" of the postwar period, England was dull and philistine. The arts were more exciting in France and life was more interesting in Germany. England was in fact so stodgy in its tastes, so puritanical in its morals, and so drearily middle-class in its culture that almost any alternative society was to be preferred.

Politically this hostility to England could find expression equally well on the Left and the Right. Perhaps the most striking example was the Mitford sisters, daughters of the country's highest aristocracy, one of whom, Unity, became a Nazi and another, Jessica, became a Communist. In his recent book on Unity, David Pryce-Jones tells the story of a British diplomat who was set upon by the two sisters during a visit to their country estate in the early Thirties. Are you, they demanded of him, " 'a Fascist or a Communist?' and I said, 'Neither, I'm a democrat.' Whereupon they answered, 'How wet.' "

There were a good many others in the upper reaches of British society who also thought that being a democrat was "wet" (or, as I suppose we would say today, square). Some, like Sir Oswald Mosley and his followers in the British Union of Fascists, as well as prominent writers like D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis, sympathized with or actually supported Hitler and Mussolini (Osbert Sitwell, anticipating a similar fantasy of today about Italian Communism, once argued that Italian Fascism offered an escape from the equally horrible alternatives of Russian Bolshevism and American capitalism); others, like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, John Strachey, and Philip Toynbee, were attracted to Stalin and to Communism. And there were even some for whom being a democrat was so wet that they were willing to commit treason against the democratic country in which they lived. About treason, at least, there was nothing wet. Whereas "to many English people," Rebecca West later wrote, patriotism had "something dowdy about it," treason had "a certain style, a sort of elegance." Moreover, it was understandable that treason should be committed against England. Thus when Guy Burgess, who had been a Soviet agent while pretending to work for British Intelligence, fled to Moscow in the Fifties just as he was about to be caught, Auden said that his old friend had become a Russian citizen for the same reason that he himself had become an American citizen—"it was the only way completely and finally to rebel against England."

That Auden and Burgess were both homosexuals clearly had something, perhaps everything, to do with their need "completely and finally to rebel against England." And indeed, it is impossible to read books like *Children of the Sun* or Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* without being struck by the central role homosexuality played in the entire rebellious ethos of the interwar period in England. Much of the literature of the first world war itself, says Fussell, who has made a very thorough study of it, was "replete" with homosexual passion. Soldiers had been a common object of fantasy and desire for Victorian homosexuals because of "their youth, their athleticism, their relative cleanliness, their uniforms, and their heroic readiness, like Adonis or St. Sebastian, for 'sacrifice.' " It is therefore not surprising that young officers fresh out of schools where, according to Robert Graves, they were "trained up to become pseudo-homosexuals" (Graves's name, by the way, was stricken from the rolls of his own school, Charterhouse, for revealing this in his great memoir of the war, *Goodbye to All That*) regularly fell in love with each other or, more frequently, with the lower-class "lads" under their command.

BUT IF HOMOSEXUAL feeling was aroused by the war, homosexual feeling also accounted for a good deal of the pacifism which rose out of the trenches and into the upper reaches of the culture after the war was over. In war poem after war poem and in memoir after memoir, the emphasis was on the youthful, masculine beauty so wantonly wasted by the war, the bodies meant for embrace by their own kind that were consigned so early to the grave. Fussell writes of Wilfred Owen, possibly the best of the English war poets and himself a homosexual and a casualty of the war: "What he encountered at the front was worse than even a poet's imagination could have conceived. From then on, in the less than two years left to him, the emotions that dominated were horror, outrage, and pity: horror at what he saw at the front; outrage at the inability of the civilian world . . . to understand what was going on; pity for the poor, dumb, helpless, good-looking boys victimized by it all." And the way "the sight and touch of beautiful lads ending with their frightful death in a wanton slaughter" gave rise to the new postwar surge of hostility to British society is altogether explicit in the case of one Capt. Ralph Nicholas Chubb, who, in the words of his biographer,

> *watched the slaughter of a boy, a creature such as those he had always mentally, and once physically loved. He was the curly-haired, seventeen-year-old son of a blacksmith. . . . His death symbolized for Chubb all the horrors and taboos of society. The boy, a beloved object, was not only forbidden by law to be loved by an adult male but was legally sacrificed by the same laws in the service of his country.*

No wonder, then, that so many of those who resented their own country

to the point of pledging never to fight for it and even, in a few instances, to the point of joining forces with its enemies, should have been, or should have chosen to become, homosexuals. For whatever else homosexuality may be or may be caused by, to these young men of the English upper class it represented—as Martin Green so convincingly demonstrates—the refusal of fatherhood and all that fatherhood entailed: responsibility for a family and therefore an inescapable implication in the destiny of society as a whole. And that so many of the privileged young of England "no longer wanted to grow up to become fathers themselves" also meant that they were repudiating their birthright as successors to their own fathers in assuming a direct responsibility for the fate of the country.

The list of these young men is almost endless, ranging from dandies and aesthetes of the Twenties like Brian Howard and Harold Acton, to expatriate writers of the Thirties like Auden and Isherwood, to Soviet agents like Burgess and MacLean. It was through their writings, their political activities, and the way of life they followed that an indispensable element was added to the antidemocratic pacifism of the interwar ethos: a generalized contempt for middle-class or indeed any kind of heterosexual adult life. To be heterosexual was to be "an utterly dreary middleclass bore." At Oxford, said John Betjeman, it was only "state-subsidized undergraduates [who were] generally heterosexual." The best people looked to other men for sex and romance.

Anyone familiar with homosexual apologetics in America today will recognize these attitudes. Suitably updated and altered to fit contemporary American realities, they are purveyed by such openly homosexual writers as Allen Ginsberg, James Baldwin, and Gore Vidal—not to mention a host of less distinguished publicists—in whose work we find the same combination of pacifism (with Vietnam naturally standing in for World War I), hostility to one's own country and its putatively dreary middle-class way of life, and derision of the idea that it stands for anything worth defending or that it is threatened by anything but its own stupidity and wickedness. Vidal in particular often reminds one in his tone and style of the homosexual apologists described by Fussell and Green, even when he is being most up to date. For example, reviewing a recent book by Christopher Isherwood (who figured centrally in the culture of England during the interwar period before he emigrated to America, and who is thus a living link between that culture and our own), Vidal praises homosexuality for serving the alleged ecological need to control population growth. But even this trendy rationalization echoes one of his English forebears, John Addington Symonds, who once wrote: "It would not be easy to maintain that a curate begetting his fourteenth baby on the body of a worn-out wife is a more elevating object of mental contemplation than Harmodius in the embrace of Aristogiton."

The great influence of this complex of attitudes in the mid-1930s provoked George Orwell to an outburst against "so-called artists who spend on sodomy what they have gained by sponging." Even to wish to write about such people, as Cyril Connolly had just done in his novel *The Rock Pool*, was to "betray a kind of spiritual inadequacy" and "a distaste for normal life and common decency." Thinking no doubt of the contribution this "sluttish antinomianism" was making to the paralysis of British will in the face of an ever-growing Nazi threat, Orwell added, in a sentence which after forty years retains every last bit of its original force and relevance: "The fact to which we have got to cling, as to a life-belt, is that it is possible to be a normal decent person and yet to be fully alive."

One wonders: to what extent did the policy of appeasing Hitler which the British government followed in the Thirties derive from the fear that a generation raised on pacifism and contempt for the life of its own society would refuse or be unable to resist so powerful and self-confident an enemy as Nazi Germany? It would be very hard to say, although we know that at least one prominent Englishman of the day, the press magnate Lord Rothermere, believed that "a moribund people such as ours is not equipped to deal with a totalitarian state." We know, too, that Hitler himself thought the British would never fight. As he went from strength to strength they seemed to grow more

and more fearful. Except for a few lonely figures like Winston Churchill who were generally dismissed by their own countrymen as hysterical warmongers, they blinded themselves to his intentions, rationalizing away his every aggressive move, and proclaiming that every advance he made was bringing the world closer and closer to peace. What else could this mean but that they had already given up?

IT IS OF THE greatest interest to note that Brezhnev today has expressed similar sentiments about the United States. Not so long ago, in a speech to Communist party leaders in Prague—to which as little attention has been paid in this country as was paid in England to equally revealing speeches by Hitler in the 1930s—Brezhnev bragged of the advances the Soviet Union had been making under cover of détente and predicted that they would lead to an irreversible shift in the balance of power by the 1980s. One imagines that he was led to this conclusion by the response of the United States to the Soviet military buildup, a response which has uncannily followed the pattern of British response to the German buildup of the Thirties.

The historian Walter Laqueur divides the British response into four distinct stages. In stage one, it was claimed that the reports of German rearmament were grossly exaggerated; in stage two, the reports were acknowledged as true, but it was alleged that Germany was so far behind that it could never catch up; in stage three, it was admitted that Germany had achieved parity with or even surpassed Britain, but it was also said that this did not constitute a military threat since the Germans had to defend themselves against potential enemies in the East as well as in the West; and in stage four, when the full extent of German superiority was finally faced, it was said that survival now had to be the overriding consideration, and the counsels of appeasement prevailed. Compare this to Richard Pipes's description of the American response to the Soviet military buildup of the past few years:

> *The frenetic pace of the Soviet nuclear buildup was explained first on the ground that the Russians had a lot of catching up to do, then that they had to consider the Chinese threat, and finally on the grounds that they are inherently a very insecure people and should be allowed an edge in deterrent capability.*

We have, then, reached stage three. Are we about to move into stage four?

The Russians, at any rate, evidently think we already did move into it during the heyday of détente. In fact, according to a highly placed source within the Carter Administration recently quoted by the *New York Times*, the reason the Russians are so furious with the new Administration's human-rights initiative is that it seems to spell a reversal of what they previously saw as the inexorable decline of American will and American power. One can only hope that they are right; and yet the doubts grow with every new assertion by the President or the Secretary of State that this policy is not intended to "single the Soviet Union out," and with every new article in the press warning against the use of human rights as a political weapon in the service of a "mindless anti-Communism."

The Soviet Union, after all, has nothing to fear from a policy directed no more against them than against some of our own allies, or against right-wing military dictatorships which, however viciously they treat their own citizens, pose no threat to the United States, whether military or ideological. For, as Daniel P. Moynihan has pointed out, with the passing of Nazi Germany and the disappearance of Fascism as a plausible political creed, it is only Communism—or, if one prefers, Marxist-Leninism—which challenges liberal democracy in the world of ideas, values, ideologies. Small Communist or Marxist-Leninist countries attack us as viciously as, and often more effectively than, big ones. Of these countries one may say what St. Augustine said of children: their virtue resides not in their wills but in the weakness of their limbs. (Where they are not weak, as in their systems of internal control, they are fully capable of rivaling the Russians and the Chinese in political barbarism and cruelty, and sometimes, as in Cambodia, even of surpassing them.) But no such virtue attaches to the Soviet Union. As the most powerful of all the Communist states, it is by that very fact the most dangerous enemy of liberty, democracy, and human rights on the face of the earth.

There was a time when all this was well understood in the United States, but that was before Vietnam. The defeat of our effort to halt the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia has left many who supported and even supervised that effort with the feeling that there is nothing we can do to stem the tide of Communism anywhere, not even in Western Europe. They have thus ironically become the de facto allies of those who are so little opposed to Marxist-Leninism and so much opposed to the United States that they think nothing *should* be done by America to stem the Communist tide. In short, these repentant hawks (so many of whom have found a perch in the upper levels of the Carter Administration), having been wrong on the one side are now making up for it by being wrong on the other. They were wrong in their hawkishness toward Vietnam—not because they wanted to hold the line against an advancing Communist tide but because they failed to see that the costs of holding such a line in Vietnam would inevitably turn out to be too high. And now, once again, they are wrong, this time in their dovishness toward the Soviet Union—not because they want to reach an accommodation with the Russians, but because they fail to see that the Russians are after something larger and more ambitious than an accommodation with us.

To be sure, how we can prudently and effectively deter the Soviet Union and resist the advance of Communism generally without unleashing a nuclear war is a serious and difficult question—the most serious and the most difficult question of the age. But even to begin answering it requires the realization that the democratic world is under siege, the conviction that it is worth defending, and the understanding that American power is indispensable to its defense. Until this realization, this conviction, and this understanding become as widespread in the United States as once upon a time they used to be, I for one will regard all talk of recovery from Vietnam as a delusion and a deceit. Meanwhile, the parallels with England in 1937 are here, and this revival of the culture of appeasement ought to be troubling our sleep. □

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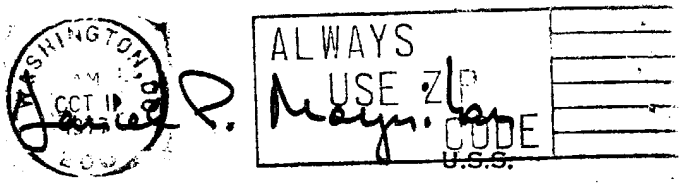

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